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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: November 26, 1957

SUBJECT: GUATEMALA: Current Political Situation

PARTICIPANTS: Julio Asensio-Munderlich, Minister Counselor, Guatemalan Embassy
HED - Mr. Bayard King, Guatemala Desk Officer

COPIES TO: ARA (2), IRC (2), Ambassador, Guatemala

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PER Fumbers OFFICE ARA
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Mr. Asensio told Mr. King that he was extremely concerned over the current political situation in Guatemala, and was convinced that the elections scheduled for January 10, 1958 would never take place. He said Guatemala was suffering from a complete lack of leadership, and that this could only play into the hands of the Communists. He said the army was divided, discredited and hesitant.

He said that he considered a coup d'etat during the next month to be very likely, and that he in fact thought it might be the best way of dealing with the Communists. He said what Guatemala needed was time really to clean out the Communists in the manner that General Martinez had done in El Salvador (General Martinez shot large numbers of Communists in El Salvador in the early 1930s).

Mr. Asensio said he considered that Ambassador Cruz-Salazar had made a mistake in coming back to Washington at this time, and that he should be in Guatemala working for his candidacy and trying to assume leadership of the anti-Communist coalition. Asensio said that the Ambassador had not discussed his presidential candidacy with him, but he knew that during Cruz-Salazar's recent visit to Guatemala he had had a three-hour conversation with General Ydigoras. Mr. Asensio said he thought Cruz-Salazar could lead the anti-Communists, possibly successfully, but that time was running out for him and that something must be done immediately. He said he was most discouraged and could foresee nothing but trouble and violence in the weeks ahead.

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